

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 HA-05 OC-06 CCO-00 MCT-01
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USIA WASHDC
DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY WASHDC
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY WASHDC
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
USINT BAGHDAD
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS SHUM IR
SUBJ: TABRIZ RIOTS: CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS AND SOME RANDOM
THOUGHTS

REF: A. TEHRAN 1879, B. TEHRAN 1762, C. TABRIZ A-4

SUMMARY. GOI REAFFIRMS FIGURE OF 9 DEAD IN RITOS BUT MOST
KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCES PLACE NUMBER SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 100 AND
300. LOCAL PRESS CARRIES FIGURE OF BETWEEN 260 AND 450 ARRESTED
AND NOTES MOST ARE MALES BETWEEN 15 AND 30 YEARS OLD. CONFIDENTIAL
PARLIAMENTARY SOURCE INDICATES GOI NOW BELIEVES JUST
OVER 6000 WERE INVOLVED IN DEMONSTRATIONS AND THAT MOBS WERE
ORGANIZED SEPARATELY AT 4 TO 6 LOCATIONS. HIGH POWERED
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MILITARY COMMITTEE SENT TO TABRIZ FOR INVESTIGATION, AND
IMPERIAL INVESTIGATING TEAM INCLUDES PARLIAMENTARIANS, BUT
NAMES NOT BEING ANNOUNCED. MILITARY REMAIN IN CONTROL OF
TABRIZ, BUT POLICE ARE RESUMING FUNCTIONS. HOUSE TO HOUSE
SEARCHES GOING ON FOR KNOWN RITOERS: ONE POLICEMAN ARRESTED
FOR LOOTING RESURGENCE PARTY HQS. EXPECTED STORIES
OF POLICE PROVOCATION FINALLY BEGINNING TO SURFACE, BUT SEEM

UNLIKELY. SOME LOCAL JOURNALISTS HAVE CONNECTED WHAT THEY SEE AS RENEWED SOVIET INTEREST IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS OVER PAST 6 MONTHS WITH POSSIBLE CLANDESTINE ROLE IN TABRIZ AFFAIR, BUT THERE IS NO RPT NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT SUCH LINKAGE, THOUGH SOVIETS HAVE SHOWN GREATER INTEREST IN RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OVER PAST FEW MONTHS. OVERWHELMING VIEW OF UNINVOLVED OBSERVERS IS THAT RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM FUELED BY DISSATISFACTION WITH PACE OF MODERN LIFE WAS SUFFICIENT CAUSE. END SUMMARY.

1. MININFO HOMAYOUN REITERATED FOR PRESS FEB 23 GOI FIGURE OF 9 DEAD AT TABRIZ, BUT VIRTUALLY NO OTHERS TAKE THIS SERIOUSLY. CONSULATE TABRIZ ESTIMATES GIVEN IN REF A, AND LOCAL JOURNALIST WITH EXCELLENT CONTACTS SAID HIS BEST GUESS WAS 180 DEAD, THOUGH OTHER (NATIONAL FRONT OPPOSITIONIST) ESTIMATES RANGED AS HIGH AS 300. INJURED CLEARLY EXCEEDED OFFICIAL FIGURES OF 125, BUT MANY RECEIVED ONLY MINOR BRUISES.

2. ESTIMATES OF THOSE ARRESTED RANGE FROM KEHYAN'S 262 TO ETELLA'AT'S 450. PARLIAMENTARY SOURCE TOLD POLOFF EVENING FEB 23 THAT PRIVATE GOI REPORT TO SELECTED MAJLES MEMBERS INDICATED JUST OVER 6000 WERE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN RIOTING. REPORT ALSO INDICATED MOB WAS ORGANIZED AT 4 TO 6 LOCATIONS WITH SOME OF THESE GROUPS SPLITTING UP LATER. RUMOR THAT TABRIZ MOSQUES WERE CLOSED BY GOI PRIOR TO RIOTS NOW CIRCULATING IN TEHRAN, BUT WITHOUT FOUNDATION. MAIN MOSQUE IN TABRIZ MAY HAVE HAD RESTRICTED ACCESS IN LATER STAGES OF

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GATHERING, BUT EYEWITNESSES SAW MOBS SPILL OUT OF ALL MAJOR MOSQUES EN ROUTE TO CONFRONTATION.

3. PRESS FEB 23 ANNOUNCED HIGH POWERED MILITARY COMMITTEE OF 15 HAD ARRIVED IN TABRIZ HEADED BY FOLLOWING KEY GENERALS: GENERAL JAFAR SHAFAGHAT, VICE CHIEF OF SUPREMEN COMMANDER'S STAFF (SCS) (REPORTEDLY AN AZARBAIJANI PLACE IN CHARGE OF THE MISSION TO MAKE CERTAIN THE SHAH GETS TRUE STORY); LT GEN NASER FIROOZMAND, CHIEF, MILITARY SPECIAL INSPECTION, SCS; MAJOR GENERAL MOHAMMAD RAHIMI, VICE DEPUTY FOR OPERATIONS AND INTELLIGENCE COMMANDER FOR IRANIAN GROUND FORCES, AND RETIRED MAJOR GENERAL HBIB BEYTOLLAHI, FORMERLY IN INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS (J-2) FOR SCS. OTHER TEAMS ON SCENE INCLUDE MAGISTRATES (REF A) AND IMPERIAL INSPECTION TEAM OF CIVILIANS WHICH INCLUDES SOME PARLIAMENTARIANS WHOSE NAMES HAVE NOT BEEN RELEASED.

4. CONSULATE TABRIZ REPORTS MILITARY ARE STILL IN CONTROL OF CITY, BUT POLICE ARE RESUMING FUNCTIONS. HOUSE-TO-HOUSE SEARCHES ARE GOING ON FOR KNOWN AND SUSPECTED RIOT PARTICIPANTS. CONSUL REPORTS ONE OF HIS ECECURITY ESCORTS WAS ARRESTED FOR LOOTING WHEN SEARCH TEAM DISCOVERED MATERIAL FROM GUTTED

RESURGENCE PARTY HQS IN HIS HOME DURING SEARCH.
MILITARY FORCES NOW PRESENT IN TABRIZ ARE MAINLY KURDISH
TROOPS FROM KERMANSHAH WHO DO NOT SPEAK TURKISH AND WHO,
ACCORDING TO CONSUL METRINKO, BELIEVE THEY ARE PROTECTING
TABRIZ AGAINST COMMUNISTS.

5. RANDOM STORIES OF POLICE PROVOCATION AT TABRIZ ARE BEGINNING TO SURFACE IN TEHRAN, BUT AS NEAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE, THESE HAVE NO BASIS IN FACT. CONSULATE TABRIZ NOTES ALL POLICE IN CITY ARE NATIVES OF REGION AND WOULD NOT WANT TO ENGAGE IN VIOLENCE, PARTICULARLY AGAINST TOUGH TURKISH-SPEAKING MOB. ONE REASON ADVANCED HERE FOR INADEQUATE GOI PREPARATION FOR EVENTS WAS ABSENCE OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNOR AZMUDEH ON TOUR OF PROVINCE FOR 4 DAYS PRECEDING FEB 18.

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ONE LOCAL AND ANOTHER FOREIGN JOURNALIST THERE HAVE BOTH NOTED OVER PAST 6 MONTHS INCREASING INTEREST OF SOVIET DIPLOMATIC PERSONNEL IN RELIGIOUS MATTERS (EMB COMMENT: THIS WOULD HARDLY BE SURPRISING FOR ANY ASTUTE OBSERVER) AND HAVE CONNECTED SOVIET'S INTEREST WITH POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT IN TABRIZ AFFAIR AT CLANDESTINE LEVEL OR THROUGH LIBYAN SURROGATES. EMB HAS NO RPT NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THIS VIEW, AND ALL INFO WE HAVE POINTS TO TABRIZ FRACAS AS MANIFESTATION OF RELIGIOUS FEELING. WE WOULD NOT RULE OUT POSSIBLE MOB LEADERSHIP BY A FEW WHO HAD RECEIVED SOME TRAINING ABROAD, BUT UNLESS WE SEE MORE CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE THAN HAS SURFACED SO FAR (MOSTLY UNSUPPORTED GOI STATEMENTS), WE WOULD SHARE VIEW OF VAST MAJORITY OF UNINVOLVED OBSERVERS WHO FEEL SIZE OF TABRIZ DISTURBANCES MOSTLY DUE TO ROUGH TURKISH PEASANTRY GETTING WORKED UP ON RELIGIOUS GROUNDS AND TAKING OUT ITS DISSATISFACTION WITH COURSE OF CHANGE IN MODERN LIFE ON SYMBOLS AND PRESENCE OF THAT LIFE IN TABRIZ. AT THE SAME TIME, EVIDENCE IS FAR FROM IN YET ON WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE INSTIGATORS AND COORDINATORS BEHIND THE PEASANT RELIGIOUS FURY.

6. BOMB THREAT TO CONSULATE SHIRAZ BEING REPORTED SEPTEL.
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